



PO BOX 854 Litchfield, CT 06759 Tel (860)567-3787

March 21, 2022

Testimony Supporting

S.B. No. 449 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF PHYSICIANS IN THE STATE.

Good morning, Senator Anwar, Representative Steinberg and other distinguished members of the public health committee. My name is Guy Manetti, M.D. I am a board-certified urologist practicing in Danbury. I am president-elect of the Connecticut Urology Society and am here today representing over 800 physicians and physicians in training in the medical specialties of urology, otolaryngology, ophthalmology and dermatology in support of any legislation that will help recruit and retain physicians in Connecticut, including SB 449.

Today you will be hearing from many of my colleagues in the above-mentioned specialties with both written and oral testimony. Their presence speaks volumes about the critical importance of this bill and the concepts it advances. We appeal for immediate help for physicians who are struggling to keep their private practices independent, as venture capital and other organizations reach into the very heart of medical care. We have watched as practice after practice succumbs to the grip of venture capitalists. Private practices have struggled under the burden of increasing regulations and heavy-handed insurance bureaucracies to keep their doors open to serve our patients, providing employment and opportunities for our staffs in the midst of a persistent pandemic.

This is not the first time this committee has been asked to help provide provisions in our statutes to help attract physicians. Many of you will recall in 2018 a bill came before this committee asking for a task force to study this very issue.



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The Connecticut State Medical Society provided insightful testimony as to the future of medical care if we did not identify the difficulties affecting our ability to recruit new physicians to this state. Unfortunately, this alarm was never acted on.

It is now four years later, and the climate has undergone seismic shifts. We ask you to consider the following points that underscore the economic contributions the practice of medicine has on the state of Connecticut. The impact on the economy by physicians is irrefutable. The jobs physicians create are impressive:

- Over 51,000 direct jobs are supported by physicians
- Over 122,000 total jobs are supported by the physician industry
- On the average 12.0 jobs are supported by EACH physician -- this is up 80% since 2000.

We must also consider the aging of providers, and the impact of the lingering pandemic that has forced many experienced physicians to opt for an earlier than planned retirement. This compounds the importance of recruitment and retention of physicians in Connecticut.

The economic contribution will be further highlighted by the State Medical Society, but the demographics of the physician workforce - and the need to sustain and enhance it - is alarming.

- Over 1/3 of Connecticut physicians are 60 or older.
- Only approximately 1,900 are under 40 years old, and the size of this demographic continues to decrease.
- National projections predict a shortage of approximately 100,000 doctors by 2025.
- When we ask our UCONN and Yale residents why they do not select Connecticut as their future home, the answer is always the same. "More opportunity for better quality of life in other states." This supports the ranking of Connecticut as one of the lowest in the nation, coming in at **#43** for in medical school retention.



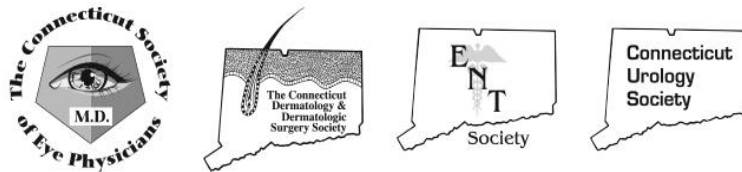
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- How can we compete with other states to ensure Connecticut is attracting these highly skilled medical doctors?

We hope this underscores the severity and importance of this alarming problem. We have passed the tipping point and need some significant measures to make Connecticut a competitive state that can adequately take care of the future healthcare needs of its citizens. We know our difficulties in recruiting and retaining desirable doctors do not stem from one specific problem, but are due to the confluence of circumstances that can be addressed by acting on the following areas:

- Take some of the administrative burden off the backs of physicians and their staffs. High-deductible plans created by insurers effectively shift much of the risk and burden of collection of co-pays and deductibles onto physicians and their staffs, greatly increasing the paperwork and creating immeasurable hardships on these already strained practices.
- Eliminate the requirement for prior authorization on those services that routinely - and justly - get approved.
- Eliminate the costly and sometimes dangerous requirement of step therapy, allowing physicians to make medical decisions based on the best interests of their patients.
- Prevent the attachment of physician's personal assets in prejudgment medical liability cases. Physicians have adequate medical liability coverage, as is legally required for their profession.
- Reduce medical liability premiums for physicians by instituting meaningful tort reform, including reasonable capitation of medical liability judgments.

Action on these matters will provide relief to physicians struggling to continue practicing in Connecticut. And more importantly, it will untie the hands of physicians, giving them a fighting chance to attract new physicians who will bring the expertise needed to sustain high-quality care in Connecticut.



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These areas can and must be addressed in this session, giving immediate relief to physicians who only want to serve their patients and our state. We just need your help in creating the legislation to get us there. Let's work together to make Connecticut a more competitive state that is better able to attract – and keep -- new physicians.

Thank you for your consideration in supporting legislation that will make a difference in the quality of healthcare that we deliver in the years to come.